CAMP

FLOYD

Uncovering a bit of the past — layer by layer and person by person

BY SUSAN LYMAN
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When it was settled by a family named Carson, back in 1855, Fairfield, was a quiet farming town. It's a quiet farming town now.

But Fairfield, Utah County, hasn't always been a quiet farming town. For three years it was home to Camp Floyd, the largest military base in the country. From 1858 to 1861, Fairfield had a population of 7,000 and was the territory's third largest city.

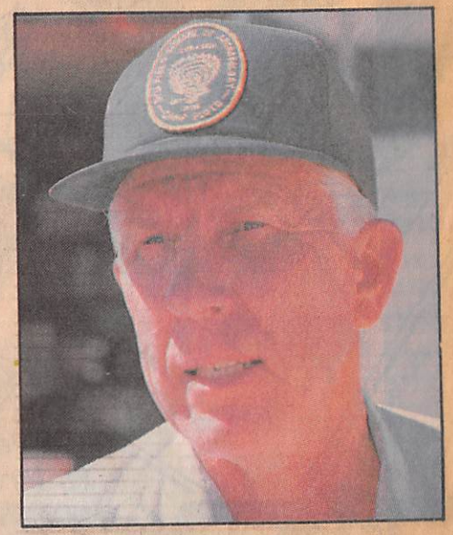
Today, Dale Berge, professor of anthropology at Brigham Young University looks out over the tiny town surrounded by rabbitbrush and says,"This is the kind of place that really gets my adrenalin going." There is very little to be seen of Fairfield and nothing of Camp Floyd. Berge, however, has imagination.

He is looking at the site where General Albert Sydney Johnston's army was headquartered, and he is seeing not just the bottles and buttons and foundations of buildings he is about to unearth — he is seeing people.

Each summer for six years he and his students and volunteers have spent several months excavating at Camp Floyd. Last summer they uncovered the bowl of a clay pipe on which a soldier had scratched his name: John Dowling.

This past winter, Berge made his annual research trip to the National Archives in Washington, D.C. He found Dowling's re-

A variety of pipes, many of them handmade by the soldiers, have been uncovered at Camp Floyd.



Dale Berge, anthropology professor at BYU, is in charge of excavations at Camp Floyd. He sees more than the dust and dirt.

At the site, Berge keeps a table on which he displays what they've found — bone-handled knives and forks, 58-caliber bullets, broken china. He has bright gold replicas of brass buttons and buckles, as well as the actual rusty insignia they uncovered. When school children drop by, he lets them compare the two and explains what the various symbols stand for. (Many of the officers were West Point graduates and proudly displayed that insignia; some were Masons who established Utah's first Masonic Order.)

Berge also shows visitors a map of Camp Floyd — made by Army surveyor James Simpson — and leads them out onto the desert to see the foundations of the officers' quarters.

Last year they uncovered some barracks; this year they are looking at the officers quarters. The officers quarters were apparently just like the enlisted men's: a simple whitewashed room, 18 feet square, with a fireplace. But where enlisted men

cruitment records.

"John Dowling was 5 feet 9 inches with blue eyes and a fair complexion," recites the professor. "He was a recent immigrant from Ireland, a member of Company I, 10th Infantry, who made corporal in 1860 at Camp Floyd and made sergeant a year later, during the Civil War. He was mustered out of the Army in 1862.

"That's what I like about historical archaeology," says Berge, "you can re-create a life. Some archaeologists are fascinated by prehistoric cultures — I'd rather identify individuals."

Camp Floyd sits on private property, grazing land owned by Marvin Carson, a descendent of the original pioneers. Because it's never been plowed, the land preserves what is left of Camp Floyd under a layer of soil and sagebrush. In six years the BYU team hasn't touched a tenth of the site. They carefully rebury each excavation when they are finished.

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Bottles in all shapes and sizes help tell the story of what life was like for soldiers at Camp Floyd. Insignia in various forms have also been uncovered. Soldiers occupied the camp from 1858 to 1861, after Johnston's Army marched into the Great Basin.

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